FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

Volume XXI, Number 4, August 1970

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Our purpose: To promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God, regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

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That which is called God by the Christians,
Jehovah by the Jews,
Ultimate Reality by the Hindus,
The Buddhamind by Buddhists,
Allah by Mohammedans,
And which the Chinese call The Tao —
That is the Real Self
And is all-pervading.
May we experience That!

(Courtesy of Carol M. Mandola)

GUEST EDITORIAL

MEDITATION ON THE FAMILIAR THING: These days, when we are trying every opening we can find for reconciliation, understanding, and renewal of faith, it might be of interest to consider a simple little event that has added dimension to my life.

On one of the rare perfect days we have had this season I was in my garden with two other members of a local society, cutting flowers for a luncheon we were attending later in the day. We had considered and discarded those flowers more difficult to arrange and were gathering all that I could spare from a long border across our back garden, when the bells of the church in the village below our hill began to chime for noontime.

Two of us kept on with our cutting. But one—who lives farther away and had never heard these bells before—stopped and listened to the familiar tune. When the last tones had faded away, she remarked that she could not understand how we could go about any task when such beautiful music surrounded us. We made such answers as we thought proper, such as—we could listen as well while we chose blossoms, or we wanted to gather as many as we could before we had to leave.

But the truth was we had become so familiar with the daily chiming of hymns we had forgotten that "To be still and know that I am God" applies to today's living as it did to the years-ago.

Ever since, I have been impressed by that small incident, which so graphically illustrates how we allow repetition to dull appreciation. Each noontime now, I not only listen to the bells but try to recall the words that have been set to their lovely tunes. While I listen, I try to see, as if for the first time, the wide view spread before me, our sloping hill, the old and tall trees that hide a ravine, the Susquehanna River flowing by, the Capitol dome and church spires across the banks and the blue-lavender mountains in the background.

Each bird song, each freshly opened flower, each white cloud drifting by should be observed as if it were the first day of creation and I was the first to behold its beauty. Each thing is a gift and I am the recipient.

The circle cannot be complete until I have in some way expressed appreciation to the Giver.

—Catherine Cabeen Houck

FOR ALL THINGS

Frona Lane Davidson

Kindness, a honeysuckle,
climbs upward.
Sadness, a withering rose,
curves downward,
Happiness, a sunflower,
faces the sun.

Love, climbing upward,
love, curving downward,
love, facing sunward,
humbles and circumscribes,
accords and sublimates
all things as one.

SIX AXIOMS OF REALITY

Henry J. Gernhardt, Sr.

The material, tangible structure of the universe is temporal. Matter is but congealed energy, perhaps a germ of life. It is not the fundamental, determinative, or the ultimate. It is temporary, transitory, subject to use or abuse. *Change and decay in all around I see.*

The Spirit and the spiritual are fundamental, determinative, and ultimate.

Incarnation is the intention and the purpose of Spirit in the time-space experience and realm.

* * *

Prayer is the Spirit's medium of operation, impartation, and communication.

Love is the Spirit Nature and motivation.

Worship is the earnest effort of receptivity and response in confrontation with Spirit, God. It is exercised in communion, service, and sacrifice; in the total manifestation of life and living in union and unity with the Spirit, God.

MEDITATIONS

Mildred Long

NO MAN LIVES ALONE . . .

"No man lives to himself alone." This is an astonishing fact, a mysterious, incomprehensible condition of existence. No matter how he may try, man cannot escape God. No matter how much he may hate his fellow men, man cannot deny relationship with them. Nor can he get away from the fact that his life has a bearing, for good or ill, on other lives. And in turn the lives of other people are making their impact upon his own whether he likes it or not. It is an inescapable reality that all life is bound together by invisible threads of the spirit.

It is said that if you lift your hand you move the spheres. This slight movement of your hand sets in motion vibrations in the air which extend out beyond the stars. If this is true in the physical world, if ether is thus sensitized, what shall we say of the world of mind and spirit?

God is the author of all life. It is God's spirit that is breathed into our bodies and inspires our thinking. He is in all of us, giving us life and breath and spiritual understanding. Therefore every living soul draws his breath from God.This makes us all partakers of His life whether we recognize the fact or not.

God is the author and creator of all thought, all comprehension, all inspiration. When we think, we use His power. When we speak, we cooperate with God to set His thought-waves in motion. When we listen to another's word, God gives us understanding. Life has touched life, thought has set in motion other thoughts. It goes on and on. It is all an expression of God's power.

I wrote a meditation which found publication. An announcement said that little magazine had a circulation of one and a quarter million around the world: Staggering! My little words have gone out encircling the globe. They proclaim my thinking, transmitting my spirit to others like myself who think and feel because we are a part of God and His creation.

A prayer group prays. We do not know the people: John, Mary, Peter, Anne. But God knows them. Our prayers set in motion that mysterious power we call "spirit." Spirit pervades all life, all space, all time. Because we direct a blessing toward John by our cooperation with God in prayer, a change takes place in him. Inspiration creeps into his mind. Disaster is stayed because he stops the car, not knowing why he does so. Illumination suddenly causes him to do a certain thing or say a certain word. And if John happens not to be tuned in to the Spirit so he can get the blessing—wonder of wonders!—someone else who is tuned in, whose identity is completely unknown to the pray-ers, receives the blessing. The trees wired with electricity on Christmas Tree Lane are all lighted by the turning of one switch. So prayer sets in motion electric currents, spiritual vibrations, that may reach to the ends of the earth.

What shall we do with this staggering conception: that my thought, my word, my breath, my gesture, my secret unspoken inspiration moves the universe?

With God's help I resolve: to think His thoughts, to speak

only love and truth, to breathe out health, to point others to the true Light, to let the Holy Spirit of God breathe into me His inspiration so that all that goes forth from me will bring healing, Light, Love, and God's pure life to all mankind. So shall we be truly brothers. So shall we fulfill God's purpose and bring in the Kingdom of God on earth.

The Silence of the soul resting in God is not lifeless. It is vibrant like the early dawn, full of expectancy, full of anticipation and joyousness, full of activity.

The Silence holds within its grasp the whole of life. Here we meet God face to face. Here we let go of self and allow it to be swallowed up in God. Here we eat of the divine food and drink from the fountain of life. Here our past is redeemed and our future beckons. In these moments a new perspective is given, a new hope is born. Life takes on new meaning. As the bud begins to blossom into a rose, so now in this silence new growth takes place quietly, without pretension, without self-will. It is a new life inspired and activated by God Himself into whose love and mercy we have committed ourselves.

In this Silence we lose something. Some of the grossness of humanity falls away. Some of the human desires let go their hold. The shadows of past sinning and imperfection vanish. The weight of guilt is gone.

Likewise we receive. Whatever of mortality is loosened from our consciousness, in its place we now have made room for more of God, more of His indwelling love and power. Alone with Him, we take His hands and feel His power vibrate through our bodies. We feel His touch and receive healing for body, mind, and soul. We look into His eyes and, beholding His tender compassion, we fall to our knees in humble confession. Only the pure in

heart can endure His searching gaze. The fire of His spirit burns out the dross. And we allow and welcome this purification.

Then we pray: "Lord, I am ready. What do You have for me to do?" Holding ourselves in this willingness, we feel already the anticipation of the great summons. The horizon of our little lives widens. Light beckons us on ahead. And we go unafraid. Though all is as yet unrevealed before us, light directs and leads the way.

All of this transpires in the Silence. It is meaningful, vibrant, transforming, and healing. And we are made more fit to be His servants and the channels of His love. It is divine activity. AFTER the activity in the Silence, we begin to understand how it is possible to have rest in activity. That kind of rest which issues from the center of us where the Silence dwells.

It is said that at the center of the whirlwind there is not enough breeze to ruffle a baby's curl. So in the center of us—when we are centered upon God—we find peace and rest. This rest is a source of strength and wisdom while outwardly we engage in activity.

While we work, there goes on within us this constant communion with the Father who is present in the Silence within.

Sometimes He speaks to us. A hymn runs through our minds. A verse of Scripture flashes on the screen to give clear guidance. A special illumination is given for a particular need. While our bodies work for Him, our souls rest in His presence, in His love.

This is the kind of rest Jesus knew when He lay asleep in

the boat in the midst of the storm. The rest of perfect faith, perfect confidence, perfect peace.

Such rest is possible for us only after we have spent much time in the activity of rest and have learned the secret of His indwelling power and presence. Such rest is a divine gift.

EACH MAN CREATES GOD IN HIS OWN IMAGE

Gladys Foreman

The God of Eichmann,
least of the human race,
the God of Schweitzer
of the compassionate face;
the man of hate,
the man of heart:
Are not their Gods
space worlds apart?

MAN

Lillian Hammer

Man — is a little bit
Of everything:
Of the sun, a spark,
Of the rain, a drop,
And, on the earth . . .
A bloody dot.

LIGHT OF LIGHTS

Eleanor Ebersole

The darkness claims
what was never claimed by light,
moments of tranquility
much like the hurricane circle
still and inward, clear
with stars that never hesitate
proclaiming clarity and right.

The darkness comes
muddy, shadow on shadow,
fear on fear, terrifying, shrill,
causing shutters, doors to be locked
and tightness of the throat.
Darkness, clarified, proclaims
a clearness unknown to day,
deeper truth without up or down,
or in or out, or depth below.

Darkened faith
transforms dependence on the eyes
to trust that mentions no detail,
nor counts, nor categorizes. In darkness
faith becomes its own and mounts
a fearless, guileless steed.
Within the darkness brightness lies.

"I am convinced that there is as much truth in darkness as there is in light." —Eleanor Ebersole. (The author intends this poem as a sequel to "And All The World Is Light," which appeared in the June issue. —Editor)

MOSES I THIRST

Emma S. McLaughlin

Though water swirls about me, I thirst.
Withered as a field of mown hay,
burned by atomic fires,
carried by dry winds into a desert place
where there is only waste,
exhausted, eyes dull-glazed
from endless peering
into the distant haze of lost mirages,
throat clogged with dust of dreams,
choked by a swollen tongue,
vacant of mind,
I seek a water to revive my soul.

Moses! Lift up your staff!
Strike water out of rock,
bright-bubbling water; exploding iridescence
in the sunlight; then I will drink
and drinking, be reborn.

See how I thirst!
With flood tides rising about me
still I thirst.
This deluge can be death to humankind,
not everlasting life;
it swirls along, in places oil-smooth,
yet streaked with Abel's blood;
it teems with rotting refuse,
with fish that float white-belly to the sun
and dead rats bobbing out of littered alleys
and the bodies of innocent children
fattened only in death,
and the blood of assassins's victims. . .
upon its crest float faded pieces of idols
and broken crates of Thorazine;
over it hover ghosts of all our gods
white wraiths of then and now.
These patterns merge and blend
with blood of wars,
forming a vast disorganized design
that sweeps me to destruction.

Here is no gushing spring,
no filtered water seeping from the rock
to help sustain a life,
no balm of Gilead to rub on wounds
and spur me in the search —
and so I thirst.

Moses! Raise up your staff
and smite the stone.

A TIME FOR EVERY PURPOSE

Phyllis Malone

One evening a few years ago, some friends and I were having dinner in a restaurant. I noticed a young, fashionably dressed woman at the next table who looked miserable and seemed on the verge of tears. She and her escort were both staring off into space. For a moment I watched them. It was evident that there was trouble between them. Something inside me said, "Pray for her." What should I pray about? I thought. I don't even know her or anything about her. The voice again gave the gentle command, "Pray for her." So in a halting manner, not knowing what to pray for, I began silently, "Lord, fill her with your precious Spirit. I don't know what her needs are, but you do. Undertake in every need that she has at this moment. I commit her to you. Thank you, Jesus."

Our dinner was served, and I joined in the table conversation and forgot about the couple next to us. That is, until I heard a hearty laugh and saw that both of them were enjoying their evening and each other.

That evening before I fell asleep, the incident came back to me. If a few words in the name of Christ in but a few moments had such power, why hadn't I applied it in other areas concerning people that I didn't know or might not ever see again? The thought almost overwhelmed me, because of how far-reaching it could be. I kept thinking about it during my quiet time the next day. Was it

feasible that if I willingly made myself available to God, He would use my prayer life in a way I had never dreamed possible? It was like a lovely secret lodged close to my heart. First, I found the morning paper a source for prayers: a child that had been burned in an explosion; a teen-ager hurt in a one-car accident; a middle-aged widower who attempted suicide because he felt no one really cared what happened to him; an elderly grandfather who felt his children were interested only in his money—he had crossed the street against the light, without thinking, and was hit by a car. Each needing a prayer for healing, healing of the body and of the soul. And for someone to commit them to the tender care of Jesus.

I discovered my day for grocery shopping was a wonderful time for silent worship. I remember a woman shopping with two small children, one in the grocery cart, the other tugging at her skirt. She was busy, frustrated, and tired. Her commands to her children soon had them in tears too. "Father, give her a quiet heart and a calm voice," I asked, "and a bubbling love for her children. Thank you, Lord, for doing this." Later, she was behind me at the check-out stand, hugging and kissing each one of her little girls, frustration exchanged for serenity.

God's power is an expanding power, and I began to search for new areas for prayer. I was constantly astonished at what was placed in front of me. I found no need for closing my eyes or bowing my head. I was having a conversation with God. Those whom He wanted at the Throne of Grace seemed to leap into my mind. If I refused to obey, He wouldn't use me. I felt a great joy at being

used. I hadn't asked for anyone in particular for whom to pray. They just happened. Had these same opportunities always been there, and I had been too dull-witted or too possessed with self to grasp at what now seemed so evident?

The sound of sirens carries a long distance. Usually when I hear one, I don't know if it is an ambulance or fire engine. The needs for either are similar, a petition for wisdom, strength to make immediate decisions, and the beginning of healing for anyone who is hurt. Sitting in church waiting for the service to begin gave me another opportunity to look around and observe the faces of people. If anyone looked anxious, fearful, or unhappy, I asked God to reach out and touch their hearts and fill them with Himself.

Not long ago I was cooking dinner for my family, and I heard a loud screeching of brakes. My own six-year-old was in the kitchen with me, so I knew she was safe. Two words came forth spontaneously, "Lord, undertake." A neighbor boy was riding his new bicycle. Being only seven, he wasn't careful, and a car had slammed on its brakes in a desperate attempt to avoid hitting him. Its front bumper touched the wheel of his bike, causing him to fall off—but without injury. For me, "Lord, undertake" are two of the most beautiful words God has written on my heart. I have used them so many times since then, when emergencies have erupted.

I have a son with a beard, so bearded youth have a special place in my prayers. When I pass a young person on the street, meet them side by side at a stop light, watch them enjoying the sunshine on a park bench, I ask God to empty their hearts of anything that might be displeasing to Him and to immediately saturate

them with His loving Spirit. Then I commit each one to Christ.

What caused this transformation in my prayer life? Ecclesiastes 3:1 helps me answer my own question: "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven."

A MOMENT — A LIFETIME

Rebecca G. Sanchez

It takes years to live on earth
only a moment to enjoy its beauties.

It takes years to acquire wealth
only a moment to share it.
It takes years to have power
only a moment to lose it.

It takes years to build friendship
only a moment to break it.

It takes years to work for success
only a moment to deeply feel it.
It takes years to be in the world
only a moment to be out of it.

It takes years to search for inner peace
only a moment to accept it.

It takes years to seek happiness
but a lifetime to master its art.

It takes years to have freedom
but a lifetime to understand it.

It takes years to conquer your own world
but a lifetime to know yourself.

It takes years to gain knowledge
but a lifetime to seek wisdom.

It takes years to earn a living
but a lifetime to make a life.
It takes years to seek for love
but a lifetime to love.

It takes years to hear the *word*
but a lifetime to feed the *soul*.

FELLOWSHIP'S FELLOWSHIP

Because Fellowship in Prayer is nationwide, with members in every state, as well as international, in thirty countries overseas, it has never made a practice—in spite of many requests—of holding dinners. The arrival of its twentieth anniversary in June 5, however, called for something extra. So a dinner was held, on that date, in the Fifth Avenue Hotel in New York City. More than a hundred members attended, some traveling from Connecticut, Maryland, Pennsylvan-

SOME OF THE ANNIVERSARY PARTICIPANTS

FIP ANNIVERSARY SPEAKERS

ia, and Massachusetts. They gathered in the glass-walled crystal-chandeliered private dining-room—a genuinely ecumenical group that included Protestants, Roman Catholics, Jews, Greek Orthodox, Vedantists, Mohammedans, and so forth—to make one another's acquaintance, to eat roast beef, and to pray with the Reverend Eugene M. Pierce, of Marble Collegiate Church, and Mrs. Helen Margalith, of Stephen Wise Free Synagogue, and Father Emmet J. Norton, S. J., former director of Apostleship of Prayer. They listened to Treasurer Joseph E. Thompson's appreciation of Kathryn G. Brown's twenty years of service to the Fellowship. When he presented her with a sterling-silver tray, they arose to applaud her. They listened to her words of thanks—which included the introduction of her 88-year-old mother who was present—and also to three songs beautifully sung by Ellie Mao Mok, accompanied at the piano by her daughter Gwendolyn. They heard with appreciation speeches by The Honorable Dr. Marion Mill Preminger and Dr. Teh-yao Wu, president of Tunghai University in Taiwan, who spoke with moving dignity about "A Christian College's Response To A Non-Christian Society." The dinner was judged such a success—as seems to be true, according to the photographs by Joseph Stanley that are shown on these pages—that hopes were expressed of its becoming an annual event.

GLEANINGS FROM THE FIELDS OF PRAYER

Sophie C. Brown

There is not a very clear distinction between *prayer* and *devotions*. One of our larger dictionaries defines "devotions" as "religious worship, piety, or prayer." In this same book I find that prayer means "thanks and praise given to God and requests made of Him—a sort of religious service for public worship."

There are so many kinds of prayers.

We have the more formal prayers for regular church services. They seem to be in keeping with the dignity of these surroundings and the more sanctified mood in which we find ourselves when in God's sanctuary.

Then there are the personal prayers between the individual and his Maker, when he finds himself in the need of comfort and assurance, forgiveness, of the need to express love or gratitude for any of the many experiences that fill our lives.

So often a prayer ascends without a spoken word or the bending of the knee. It may be a hope, a wish, a look, a tear. This was found between the pages of a Virginia Masonic Journal:

> Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
> Uttered or unexpressed,
> The motion of a hidden fire
> That trembles in the breast.
>
> Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
> The falling of a tear
> The upward glancing of the eye
> When none but God is near.

We also read:

> It matters not oft you kneel
> In attitude of prayer so true
> Unless inside, where no man sees,
> Your very soul is kneeling too.

In earlier years it was almost a universal custom in Christian families to hold family prayers. There is a prominent family in the Midwest that has made a habit of gathering for morning prayers, a source of comfort and strength during a time of tragedy. We know of prayer time being part of the regular daily program in the lives of a well-known musical family.

There are many Prayer Circles throughout this land of ours. From an unknown author comes another beautiful facet of prayer:

> The weary ones had rest, the sad had joy
> That day, and wondered "How?"
> A plowman, singing at his work, had prayed:
> "Lord, help them now."
>
> Away in foreign lands they wondered "How"
> Their simple words had power.
> At home, the Christians, two or three, had met
> To pray an hour.
>
> Yes, we are wondering, wondering "How"
> Because we do not see
> Someone, unknown perhaps, and far away
> On bended knee.

Again, prayer, unbeknownst to the parties most intimately involved, is offered through a group supplication. The doctors, nurses, and others closely connected with a major surgical operation at one of our great Mid-American hospitals meet in a special session of prayer to ask God to guide the knife in the hand of the operating surgeon.

We are told that Robert Louis Stevenson, author of "Treasure Island," "Kidnapped," and many other unforgettable stories,

spent the last four years of his life in Samoa. There he fell in with the Samoan custom of ending every day with a prayer, and he wrote a number of original prayers for his own household. Here is one of the most beautiful:

"Lord, behold our family here assembled. We thank Thee for this place in which we dwell; for the love that unites us; for the peace accorded us this day; for the hope with which we expect the tomorrow; for the health, the work, the food, and the bright skies that make our lives delightful; for our friends in all parts of the earth, and our friendly helpers in this foreign isle.

"Let peace abound in our small company. Purge out of every heart the lurking grudge. Give us grace and strength to forbear and to persevere. Offenders, give us the grace to accept and to forgive offenders. Forgetful ourselves, help us to bear cheerfully the forfetfulness of others.

"Give us the courage and gayety and the quiet mind. Spare to us our friends, soften to us our enemies. Bless us, if it may be, in all our innocent endeavors. If it may not, give us the strength to encounter that which is to come, that we be brave in peril, constant in tribulation, temperate in wrath and in all changes of fortune, and down to the gates of Death, loyal and loving, one to another.

"As the clay to the potter, as the windmill to the wind, as children of their sire, we beseech of Thee this help and mercy, for Christ's sake."

A short, most meaningful prayer at any time, anywhere, could be the 15th verse of the 19th Psalm: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my Redeemer."

What a wonderful world this could be if we lived up to that way of life!

THOUGHTS ON THE LORD'S PRAYER

Helen T. Burnett

OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN

A father loves his children and is always ready to help them, to lead them, to guide them. When we bring our problems, our troubles, and our worries to God, our Heavenly Father, He is always there to help us solve our problems, to comfort us when worried, and to help us make the right decisions when troubled.

HALLOWED BE THY NAME

Sacred and holy be Thy name. What else does the word Hallowed mean? Reverenced be Thy name—Honored, Blessed, Glorified, and Worshiped be Thy name. Let us think of these meanings when we repeat this part of the Lord's Prayer. Remember: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord wilt not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain."

THY KINGDOM COME, THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

How can we help to make God's kingdom come, and His will be done on earth? By beginning with ourselves, our homes, our church, our community. His Kingdom can come within US, if we look to Him as our King, our Ruler, our Guide. The Bible has given us God's Commandments and shown us His Will for us.

Do we always remember to ask His help in making our decisions, in solving our problems? The Bible says, "Ask and it shall be given you, Seek and ye shall find, Knock and it shall be opened unto you." So if we but ask and seek and knock, the answer will come. And how does God's answer come to us?

The Holy Spirit within us will tell us right from wrong. Some may call it That Still Small Voice. Others may call it Conscience. It is the Kingdom of God within us that will lead us and guide us in the right path.

Are we then ready to accept God's will for us? Or might self-will, selfishness, self-interest, self-indulgence, or a disregard for the needs and desires of others stand in our way? Only when we are willing to give up our selfish ways and desires, and accept God's way for us, only then are we sincere in our prayer: "Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven."

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

Let us look upon our daily bread as the means of giving energy and strength to our bodies that we may carry out God's will. Let us look upon it also as the bread of life to give us spiritual strength, to develop qualities of mind and spirit that we need in our daily life to carry on God's work. Such qualities may be: forgiveness of others, cooperation with others, consideration of the rights of others, appreciation of the virtues and talents of others.

Spiritual strength will help us to encourage and inspire others as they need such encouragement and inspiration. It will help us to meet and solve our own problems, pressures, and anxieties, with greater patience, perseverance, and understanding. Yes. Give us this day our daily bread for our physical well-being and for our spiritual growth.

FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS

We know that God is ready to forgive us our sins. We know that He gave His only begotten son, Christ, who died an ignoble death on the cross so that the world might be redeemed. But God needs US to help in the work of redemption. As we forgive our debtors, those who may have trespassed against us, who may have offended us or done us a wrong, we ask God's forgiveness for our own wrong doing. We must be a part of the reconciliation. As we work to establish harmony with those who may have been unjust or ungrateful to us, so God forgives our shortcomings, our disobedience of His Commandments, and our failure to carry out His will for us. As we forgive our debtors, we ask Him to forgive us our debts.

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL

If God allows us to be tempted or tested in any situation, it is that by resisting the temptation and standing up to the test, we shall thereby be strengthened. It is the Holy Spirit—God within us—that gives us the power and strength to resist temptation. If we but call upon God and put our faith and trust in Him, He will deliver us from evil.

FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM AND THE POWER
AND THE GLORY FOREVER. AMEN.

God is Omnipotent (all powerful). He is Omniscient (all knowing) and Omnipresent (everywhere and always present). How can we ask for more? Let us establish His Kingdom within ourselves, obey His will, and glorify His Holy Name for ever and ever. Amen.

RELUCTANT PROPHETS

Janet Hackney

As you read the Old Testament, have you ever wondered why men are so reluctant to be God's prophet or messenger? We all love attention, and it's certainly a way to get noticed. And we all agree a natural talent should be used for the glory of God. Yet, Moses, one of the greatest of them all, was a most reluctant prophet.

Until his call (which comes in the third chapter of Exodus) Moses had lived a very exciting life. His mother kept him hidden until he was three months old because of a cruel edict by a new king in Egypt that all Hebrew male children were to be cast into the River Nile. When the crying of a healthy babe could no longer be kept secret, Moses' mother made a basket of bulrushes, put the child in it, and gently placed it among the reeds at the bank of the river where the daughter of Pharoah was accustomed to bathe. The princess saw the basket holding the child and took him home with her. He was reared as an adopted son of the palace until he took sides in a local racial problem,

killing an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew.

Moses fled for his life and wandered in the land of Midian until he fell in love with the daughter of a wealthy priest. When a son was born to them, Moses named the child Gershom, which meant "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land." The name could be taken as an indication that Moses thought this to be a most important milestone in his life.

But it wasn't to be so. One day as Moses was herding his father-in-law's flock, the Lord spoke to him from a flaming bush, yet the bush wasn't consumed. Now, it isn't every man who sees a blazing shrub—especially one that speaks to him: "Do not come any closer, remove your shoes, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

The dialogue between God and Moses is a personal one—the pronoun used in this passage is "I," yet when God instructed Moses to go to Egypt and lead his people out, Moses fearlessly argued: "Who am I to go to Pharaoh. Besides I stutter, God." He doesn't seem to have been an inarticulate man.

You know the rest of the story. Moses was struck dumb for a time by an irate God, but he did lead the Israelites out of Egypt, across the Red Sea . . . all the way to the Promised Land.

The prophet Jeremiah was the son of a priest. According to the Bible, the call came in poetic form: "Before I created you, I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations." However, Jeremiah quibbled, too: "But I'm too young. I'm only a youth." The call came a *second* time—and Jeremiah became one of the major prophets.

One never knows where one will meet the Lord. The Lord appeared to Amos, a shepherd of Tekoa and a dresser of sycamore trees, beside a wall. God was carrying a plumb line. Amos had several conversations

with his maker. In one of them, Amos says, "I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son." The book of Amos is brief, but enlightening.

If you have not read the book of Jonah recently, you are missing a treat. It is a short, delightful story with adventure, man's perversity and self-will leading Jonah into serious yet refreshingly comical situations. It's always a pleasure to find whimsy and humor to balance the tragic parts of the Bible.

"Arise, go to Nineveh and preach there." Reading between the lines, one knows Jonah didn't care at all what happened to those wicked citizens of Nineveh. In his opinion, they deserved the worst that could happen to them. How we love to judge others! And how often (if we're honest with ourselves) we try to hide from God. How we hope if we ignore something, it will go away and we won't get rooted out of our comfortable ruts.

"Besides," Jonah rationalized, "God is a merciful and gracious God, and I'll look like an ass when He changes His mind and forgives those sinners. That is the trouble with prophesying."

Jonah must have been a dynamic speaker. After he got the daylights scared out of him by the big fish, we're told, he converted men, beast, herd, and flock. And God did compassionately forgive the repentant sinners.

A disgruntled Jonah grumbled: "I pray thee, Lord, is not this what I said when I was in my country?"

"Do you really think you should be angry with me?"

"Oh, I'm not angry, I am faint, Lord."

"There are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons in Nineveh—and I saved them because they know not their right hand from their left."

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It's a comforting thought that God loves us stupid humans along with our more intelligent brothers.

A MEDITATION ON THE SECOND BEATITUDE

Catherine Cabeen Houck

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

The fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of Matthew are called the Sermon on the Mount. As such, they have been read, quoted, and memorized. Some ministers have shown that this entire passage can be read aloud in a twenty-minute period, the time usually allotted to a Sunday morning sermon. It probably was not done so by Christ. It very likely was not even a one-stop sermon at all—but a collection of the sayings of Christ over the period of his ministry. No one of his disciples could or would have taken down a sermon in notes nor arranged the sayings in such perfect order. It is more likely a mosaic of the most striking fragments of many of his discourses.

A knowledge of Jewish ways of teaching will help us to understand how these fragments first took shape. Our Lord was commonly addressed as "Rabbi," though considered unorthodox by many of his time, and he was a teacher; therefore his teaching technique resembled that of other rabbis. First, he would dis-

course on some topic, then sum up the discourse in easily remembered propositions. Jesus as a teacher of his time would require his disciples to repeat and learn these inductions by heart. And so, while believing the Beatitudes to be a collection, we may still accept them as authentic.

Though they have been set up as moral laws, they are, when seen in their true light, examples of the new quality of life which Christ portrayed while here on earth.

When we set out to discover what Christ meant in these teachings we must begin where he did, with the word "blessed." This word has had three meanings in its history. First it meant rich. A man was blessed with a good property, a fine family, good health, or other concrete possessions. Second, there came a time when the meaning rose from outward property to inward virtue. During the ascendancy of philosophers in Greece, a man was considered blessed if he had great knowledge. Third, the word came into its Biblical meaning, which lifts it onto the spiritual plane.

How fortunate we are that Jesus did not use the word "happy." For a man to be happy is a transient thing, one day elated, one day despondent, changed by happenstance, which is not a true state of being at all.

Who are the mourners—"they that mourn"? They are those for whom the evil that is in the world is a continual grief. They mourn the apparent eclipse of God's people and the seeming collapse of all that we have considered to be worthwhile. As they mourn, they long for a Saviour to come upon earth. "Those

who mourn shall be comforted" was not said to give us an excuse to make ours a dreary, weeping world. Some misery comes from our self-centeredness or from the bitter emptiness of those who can not love. There is no comfort in such misery. In our tumultuous world today only the graceless and insensitive can avoid sorrow. In Handel's *Messiah* we sing of Jesus as "a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief." Some people say there are times in history, such as our own, when we can not afford to be too sensitive. They tell us that if we were to feel grief for all the pains of the world the load would be too heavy for us to bear. Hence, we steel ourselves, stifle our emotions, avoid thinking, close our eyes and ears to the cries of suffering.

The world was in turmoil when Jesus lived in it. He would have us enlarge and deepen our sympathies, for "those who weep shall laugh," says Luke, and "those who mourn shall be comforted." Jesus did not use the word "consoled." A mother consoles her child when he has had a mishap by promising him it will be made up to him later. But the word "comfort" comes from the same word as "fort" or "fortified." Therefore those who are comforted find the peace that comes from strength. Isaiah said, "Oh, comfort ye my people."

I like to think of the second Beatitude as having been spoken on a hillside, the people sitting on the stones or grass, waiting for this man to speak. Women, old men, humble ones hurt by life so often. "Blessed are they who mourn," they hear him say. They turn and look at him intently, the thought running through each mind, "This man understands me."

Among Christ's listeners were as many kinds of mourners as there are today. Those who mourn for a lost one. Children mourning the loss of a parent. A mother watching the children and thinking of her own little one who sickened and died. An old man bemoaning a son who, were he here now, could ease the burden of age. Rachel weeping for her children. Mary, Martha, and Jesus himself weeping for Lazarus. Mary at the tomb, saying, "Where have you laid him? Please tell me. I want to do just one more thing for him. Where have you taken him?" Mary wept but was comforted.

To comfort these mourners Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you. Be not afraid. Let not your heart be troubled." If we could see beyond our present sorrow as God sees, we would be braver, knowing that some bright tomorrow is going to bring us comfort.

There are those who mourn for mankind. Is there anyone of us who has not mourned for Vietnam, for Biafra, for the rioters on our streets, for the innocent sufferers, for those who live in our great country and never have ordinary needs fulfilled, for those without anyone to love who therefore can love no one?

There were similar evils in Christ's day. His country was under the control of an alien nation. No land ruled by occupying troops is a settled one. There were people listening to him who knew all about hatred for the Romans. Others suspected neighbors of collaborating with the authorities. Samaritans and Jews hated one another. Saducees and Pharisees were hated—envy and distrust were even in the Temple. Each person there knew at least one of these injustices, and each was concerned for his own safety. Luke says that Jesus wept over this condition. "Oh, Jerusalem,

Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you. How often would I have gathered your children as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not." There was sadness and heartache in his voice when he wept over the city.

Can there be any comfort for those who mourn over our stricken world? There is comfort in the knowledge that God is working in our world. He has been trying to humanize it for a long time. The process seems slow to us, but God raises up prophets for every age even though the world continues to kill them as they are raised up. Nevertheless, we know that God can not be defeated and that if we are on his side we will feel safe.

Blessed are those who mourn for mankind. Those who weep with the tears of death share the suffering of our Lord. Like the executed Bonhoeffer, they are comforted. If we could see beyond each fresh disaster, we would be calmer and, as the lessons of past life unfold, we might be wiser.

There are those who mourn for their own sins. Much can be done for those who recognize the wrong they have done and are really sorry for it. This is penitence. Peter went out and wept bitterly not because he had been identified by his voice and manner but because he saw he had done the very thing he had said he never would do. He had been disloyal to Christ. The Prodigal Son knew his sin and returned home for forgiveness. Job, not even knowing why he received all his punishment, repented in sack cloth and ashes. To Job it was said, "If you prepare your heart, stretch out your hand to Him, lift up your face and fear not you shall forget your misery."

Being sorry for one's sin is the doorway to reconciliation with God. That is why Jesus called this a blessed state. Sin shuts the door to God, penitence opens it. Blessed are they who mourn for their sins, for this is penitence, and penitence leads to forgiveness, and forgiveness to inner peace. We are so blinded by a moment's sorrow, so hurt by any trouble and pain, that we forget the peace that will come to us some other day.

So Christ brings his discourse to an end. Evening falls on the hillside. One by one the listeners begin to gather up articles they have brought—a staff lying on the grass, a shawl to cover the head, a garment to sit on. In soft voices parents call to their children. They gather in family groups, neighbors walk along together, friends move side by side, each returning to his home. Each has seen into his own life, looked on his own sorrow in a clearer light, and each feels strangely comforted.

NOTICES and COMMENTS

PRAYING HANDS. The benediction delivered by Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, former Bishop of Rochester, New York, at HONOR AMERICA DAY in Washington on the Fourth of July included the hope that our national symbol might be the "folded hands," well-known to all our members. He urged that we adopt three forms of piety: 1) Form small "prayer cells" for mutual encouragement and Bible reading with Protestants, Catholics, and Jews uniting to "teach ethics to the unchurched youth of America." 2) Help the poor and economically and socially depressed with financial contributions. 3) Erect a "statue of responsibility" on the West Coast as a parallel to the Statue of Liberty on the East Coast "to remind everyone that there are no rights in this country without corresponding duties. God will bless us if we fulfill these three loyalties," adding that he hoped the national symbol would be the folded hands rather than the clenched fist . . .

LIBRARY ADDITIONS. Emanuel Rackman's *One Man's Judaism* (published by Philosophical Library, $8.95) is precisely what the title suggests, one man's Judaism, but one man unusually qualified to discuss that Judaism. Presently Rabbi of Fifth Avenue Synagogue, New York City, Mr. Rackman has collected in one volume essays previously published over a 25-year period reflecting his reasoned devotion to Jewish values and traditions. Also a Professor of Political Science, Mr. Rackman focuses his essays strongly, and sometimes quite originally, on the "politics" of human affairs, particularly the law and human rights, and many non-Jewish readers would find the book interesting and relevant.

Barry Wood is a 29-year-old Canadian student at Stanford University working toward a four-part PhD in English Literature, American Literature, the Humanities, and Religion. His book, *The Magnificent Frolic* (published by Westminster Press in paperback, $2.45), might best be approached with a bit of humorous verse of Gladys Foreman called *Suppose There Was a Mrs. God*: Wouldn't it be remarkably odd / If it could be reliably reported / That once, in a wifely way, she retorted: / "And who do you think you are — God?"

Ditto, Barry Wood's book, which is a young-hip attempt to ask leading questions about the Ultimate Mysteries, with mixed results although it is always in provocative gear. One might summarize his adventure into truth and wisdom by his advice — DANCE IT!

●

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John Watts, Editor.

TAKE TIME TO LIVE—it is the secret of success.
Take time to think—it is the source of power.
Take time to play—it is the secret of youth.
Take time to read—it is the foundation of knowledge.
Take time for friendship—it is the source of happiness.
Take time to laugh—it helps lift life's load.
Take time to dream—it hitches the soul to the stars.
Take time for God—it is life's only lasting investment.

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